

711.558  
Urb  
cop.2

Karl B. Lohmann, for Urbana Park Dist.  
The Parks of Urbana, Illinois.  
(1957)

Ref:-  
Champ.  
Co.



# THE PARKS of Urbana, Illinois





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2012 with funding from  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

THE PARKS  
OF  
URBANA, ILLINOIS



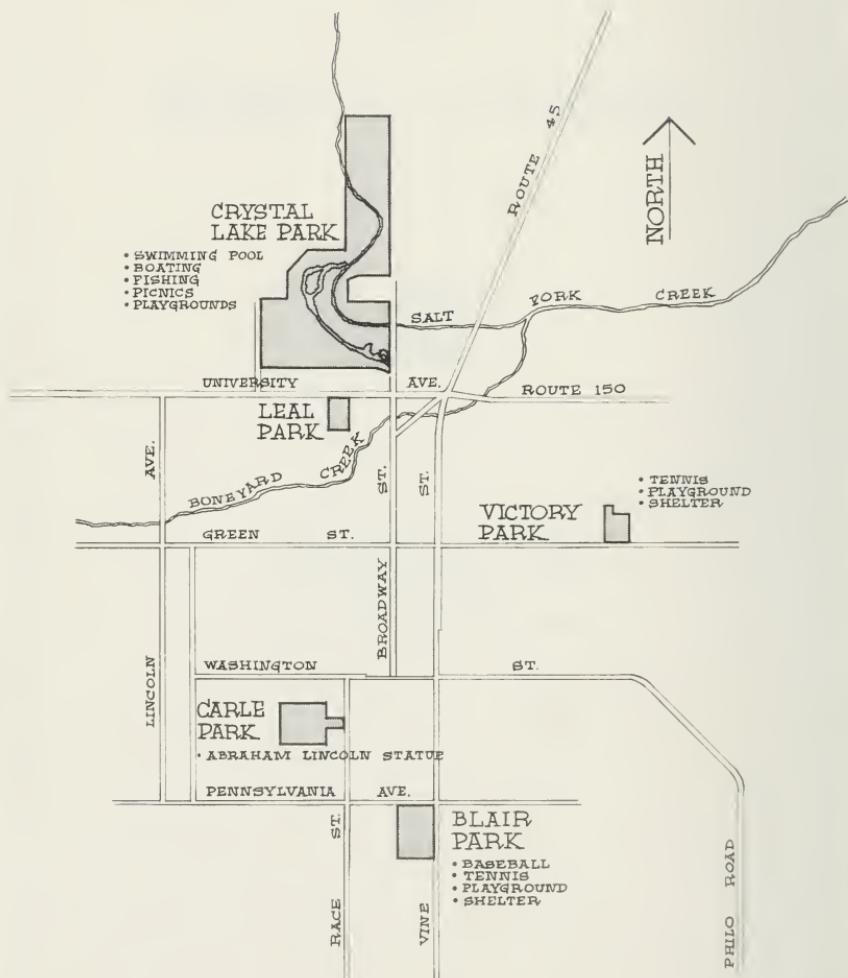
---

*50th ANNIVERSARY*  
1907 - 1957

---

THE URBANA PARK DISTRICT  
Published, May, 1957

## LOCATION PLAN



7/11.559

Ur. 1p

Copy 2

## A SUMMARY LISTING OF FACILITIES, PROGRAMS, AND HISTORIC POINTS OF INTEREST



### A. THE PARK FACILITIES

#### 1. *Crystal Lake Park*

One of the most important local points of attraction and relaxation. Upon its 90 acres are to be found beautiful woodlands, open meadows, circulating drives, a lake, facilities for picnicking, play apparatus for children, opportunities for swimming at the pool, boating on the lake and fishing, and dancing accommodations in the Park Hall. The grounds are equipped with three refreshment stands.

##### Swimming:

During the summer months the swimming pool is open daily from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. Free swimming lessons are provided for children and adults and free life saving instruction is available.

##### Baseball:

Little League games are conducted at the north end of the park each Monday through Friday.

#### 2. *Leal Park*

A tree shaded area with a shelter; mostly of local historical importance.

#### 3. *Carle Park*

A beautifully wooded park that offers pleasant opportunities for active and passive relaxation. Play equipment is included for children. A two storied shelter (with rest rooms) provides an attractive architectural point of interest.

#### 4. *Victory Park*

This property provides a sizeable open area for games, a tennis court, play equipment for children, and a memorial shelter with rest rooms.

#### 5. *Blair Park*

One of our most popular recreational areas; it includes three baseball fields, a battery of tennis courts, play equipment, a fanciful enclosure for small tots, and a modern memorial shelter.

### B. RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS

During a period of eight weeks in the summer a number of trained leaders are in charge of activities in each of the parks, save Leal Park. Their overall program includes such activities as baseball, basketball and soft ball; tennis, badminton, shuffle board, horseshoes; dancing, dramatics, handicraft, singing, story-telling; picnics, hikes, track meets; pet shows, family nights, movies and a carnival round up.

During the winter months the park board sponsors a series of Basket Ball League games at the Urbana High School and swimming classes in the Urbana High School pool.

### C. HISTORIC POINTS OF INTEREST

Leal Park is the site of Urbana's earliest pioneer cemetery. Carle Park contains (near High School) the Lorado Taft statue of Lincoln.

## THE PARKS OF URBANA, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE



Urbana has made creditable progress in providing for those recognized essentials of urban life — play for the child, sport for the youth, and recreation for the adult. Effort has proceeded toward these ends as a part of a community obligation to preserve, create and maintain facilities for wholesome recreational enjoyment.

Present accomplishments had their real start with the organization of the Urbana Park District, October 9, 1907. This was achieved, however, only after two earlier attempts had been made to secure the approval of the voters for the establishment of such a District.

The first commissioners elected to carry the program forward were Joseph C. Blair, David C. Busey, Justin S. Hall, Charles D. Rourke and Edward Buckbee. The interest on the part of this early group is now reflected in large measure in the bequests that commemorate the names of David C. Busey and Charles D. Rourke. The name of Blair Park recalls the services of Professor Blair who was not only associated with the beginnings of the Park District but who continued as commissioner over a period of forty years.

The Urbana Park District now has under its jurisdiction five different parks, containing a total of 114 acres.

### *CRYSTAL LAKE PARK* (90 Acres)

When the Urbana park commission began its work in 1907, Judge J. O. Cunningham made the District a present of 15 acres of land comprising the northeast section of Crystal Lake Park. Other areas were subsequently acquired. The present park property had in the beginning a few trees, was crossed by a stream, had a small pond, and a marsh that had to be dredged.

For a number of years the West Branch of the Salt Fork was dammed at Broadway, and provided a spread of water over the approximate site of the present lake. Many early boating and swimming experiences are associated with that body of water. Then, early in the life of the park district, the lake was dredged and separated from the creek and the creek was given a new channel. The dredging process engaged a large part of the attention of the board in 1910. The question arose after the dredging was complete as to how the great banks of earth, thrown up by the dredge boat as it cut its way through the park, were to be disposed of. Hydraulic means were given up in favor of the old-fashioned team and scrapper method. Then there was a high board fence that had to be removed.

Professor Blair, who had been brought to the campus in 1896 by Professor Thomas J. Burrill, was made directly responsible for many tree plantings on the campus and it was largely in connection with those activities that a number of trees and shrubs were introduced into this and other parks of Urbana.

In May, 1910, an idea of what Crystal Lake was to look



*One of the popular uses of the lake*



*An Easter egg hunt*

like was given to a small party of men when Park Commissioner Busey took them for a ride in his big "Cole-Thirty" and included, as he said, "a roundup of the biggest and best pleasure investment ever made in Urbana". The banks of sand had then been leveled, walks had been laid (of the two miles of roadway contemplated at least a drive was completed to the Fairground). The unsightly ditch had been graded and sodded.

Today the park combines a number of features that make it one of the most important local points of attraction and relaxation. In it are woodlands and open meadows, a lake and a number of other features, all linked together by a system of circulating and connecting paved roadways. There are also facilities for picnicking, boating, fishing, swimming, playing, dancing and other activities.

Facilities for picnicking include tables, benches, fire-places and toilet accommodations. Three new sanitary rest room buildings have recently been completed. Not only do local people take advantage of the park opportunities for many

picnics and family reunions, but people are also attracted from all over east central Illinois.

The lagoon is one of the lovely features of the park but it is beset by a double need — the removal of accumulating silt and supplementary water to tide over low level periods. The lagoon is spanned by an attractive concrete memorial foot-bridge which recently replaced an earlier wooden structure. It was made possible through a bequest of David C. and Estelle Nash Busey (Mr. Busey served as one of the first commissioners of the park district from 1907 to 1919). Near the bridge is a boat dock at which some 28 row boats are available for use.

The old park hall built against the hill and overlooking the lake, provides park board, recreational and operational headquarters and contains a sizeable assembly and dance hall which is equipped for summer activity. West of the park



*Pavilion in Crystal Lake Park*

hall is an open pavilion that serves a variety of group functions and uses. The flag pole to the east of the pavilion was donated (with flag) by organized labor on Labor Day, September 3, 1956.

Not least in importance is the swimming pool and bath house in the northern section of the park, an attraction for many thousands of swimmers every summer. This was built in 1927 at a cost of \$60,000 and in 1955 the pool and filter



Photo by Champaign-Urbana Courier

*View from tower overlooking swimming pool*

house were modernized and greatly improved in operation and usefulness, at a cost of \$69,500. A much needed new bath house is currently being planned.

In order to cope with the large influx of automobiles, several large parking areas have recently been surfaced, one at the bath house, another near the filter house at the southern end of the pool and others close to the bridge and park hall on the upper and lower levels.

Three food concession stands are distributed throughout the park. The brick house to the east of the swimming pool is occupied by the park superintendent; the park policeman resides near the park hall.

#### *LEAL PARK* (1.97 Acres)

(Few people realize that this pleasant little neighborhood park (acquired in 1907) was once a cemetery, — the oldest

of Urbana burying grounds. In it Indians and early pioneers were interred. It was named after Thomas R. Leal, County Superintendent of Schools, who had had jurisdiction over the cemetery. A brick shelter occupies the enter of the tree shaded park.)

The old cemetery was never platted and burials were promiscuously made in it during the 1830's — the ground then being a dense thicket of small timber and brush. This use of the property continued for forty years. In time the few stone monuments still standing and the unsightly waste of weeds and prostrate grave stones led the city authorities in 1902 to direct the removal of many of the remains and the conversion of the space into a public park.

### *CARLE PARK* (8.3 Acres)

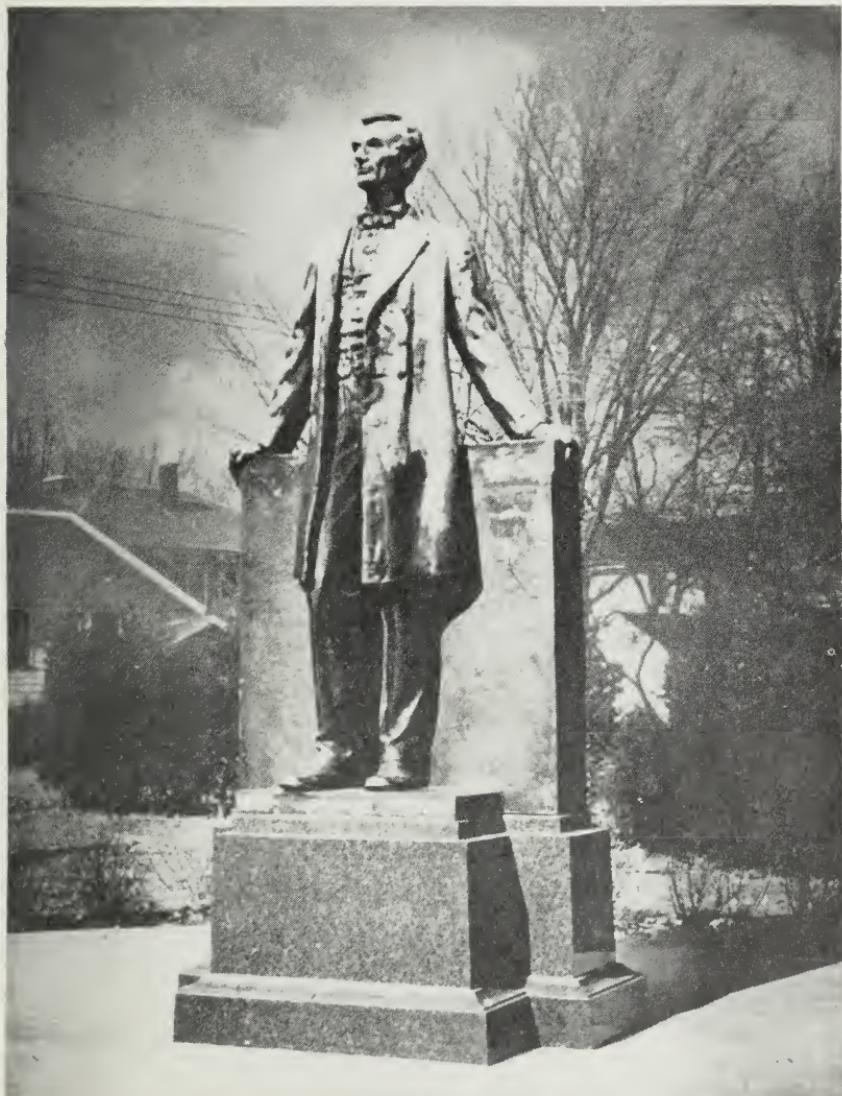
(The City of Urbana is indebted particularly to the beneficence of Mrs. Margaret Carle Morris for this pleasure ground. It was she who in March 5, 1909, not only donated the land for most of the park (except for the piece of property east of Douglas Street) but who in addition gave \$10,000 for the building of the stone two-story pavillion.) Interest on park



*Pavilion in Carle Park*

investment paid for the one thousand dollar fountain immediately adjacent to the shelter. It is hard to realize with the present assortment of many beautiful sizeable trees that this was once but a barren piece of ground.

*THE STATUE OF LINCOLN*



The Lorado Taft statue of Lincoln, located in Carle Park

close to the high school, is one of Urbana's precious assets. It portrays Lincoln as the lawyer in his younger years, leaning lightly against a supporting background and as though in the calm opening moments of a speech.

According to one of the admirers of the statue<sup>1</sup>, it conveys "a message of nobility and strength; presents strong silhouettes, imposing frontal and striking three quarters views. The powerfully modelled head is arresting, the sensitive hands are richly expressive. The pose is full of energy and alertness and the arms slightly outspread with hands pressed firmly on the architectural background. It brings the element, the stability of a triangle to the design and fulfills the necessary balance of sculptural restraint and repose".

This memorial to a great man by an eminent sculptor, (both sons of Illinois), was made possible through the generosity of Judge and Mrs. J. C. Cunningham, personal friends of Lincoln. Trustees responsible for carrying out the wishes of the donors, were Franklin H. Boggs, George W. Bennett and Joseph C. Blair.

The present position of the statue provides a close at hand view from the street, a southeasterly orientation (as intended by the sculptor), a background, and a well defined unit of space. Its original location was in front of the Urbana Lincoln Hotel where it was dedicated on July 3, 1927.<sup>2</sup> It was moved because the hotel company could not give the Park District a clear title to the plot, and for 25 years it stood midway between the high school and the park pavilion. The present site was established for it December, 1955.

#### *VICTORY PARK (2.24 Acres)*

This property was acquired in 1920 in order to cope with the growth of Urbana to the East and its need for recreational space. It was originally hoped, however, that the park and nearby Weber School might be even more closely connected. A shelter house, built from funds left by David C. Busey, has been introduced along with a bituminous surfaced tennis court. Trees and shrubs enframe the park.

---

1. Robert Tschaegle.

2. The presiding officer at the dedication was Judge Franklin H. Boggs, the principal speaker Dr. William Barton, minister and well known author of books on Lincoln; there were a few words from Lorado Taft on "the Younger Lincoln".



*One of the organized activities at Victory Park*

**BLAIR PARK**  
(11 Acres)

This recreational area (acquired in 1944) promises to be one of the very popular park properties of Urbana. It contains three baseball fields, tennis courts, a play area for children, including a special enclosure for small tots, and a shelter. Baseball games are sponsored by the Junior Chamber of Commerce and the Junior Police. The Rourke Memorial Shelter standing at the west side of the property was the gift of Nancy C. Rourke in memory of her husband, Charles D. Rourke who served as one of the earliest park commissioners. Appropriate ceremonies of dedication for this shelter were held on October 16, 1954. The shelter faces east across a play area for children and beyond to a battery of tennis courts that were built with money bequeathed to the parks by David C. Busey. On the other side of the park, close to and facing Vine Street is a stone monument (erected in 1956) which is inscribed in honor of Joseph

Cullen Blair for his long time active service both in the establishment and development of the parks of Urbana.



*Under the Rourke Shelter at Blair Park*

**GENERAL PROGRAM**  
(Present and Future)

The program and activities of the parks involves an extensive play program, particularly in the summer. The pool program in itself is a feature of many facets. It provides for hundreds of swimmers each day (130,000 during the summer of 1956). This project involves problems of operation and supervision, such as chlorination and purification of the water and a complete organization of guards and other helpers in the conduct of the pool. In addition to operation of the pool there are continuous problems of maintenance, repainting and restoration.

Aside from the overall play programs in the parks both

summer and winter, there are too the maintenance and policing operations, clean up, grass cutting, leaf removal, and a thousand and one other things that need attention throughout the season. Not the least of the projects, and one of the saddest, is the necessary removal of scores of dead and dying elms. These however are gradually being replaced by plantings of other forest trees.

The cooperative spirit between park and school authorities in Urbana is especially commendable and is in conformance with national trends in that direction. This same cooperative spirit also prevails between the City Government and the Park District. The parks of Urbana and the recreational programs provided in connection with them have met with increasing favor from the people for whose benefit they have been maintained. The esteem in which our parks are held is attested to by the many gifts and memorials that have been provided in the wills of deceased citizens of the community and in other ways.

Our park board is mindful of future as well as present needs. It feels that the increasing population of Urbana and the numerous developing residential additions do now and will more and more accentuate the need for additional recreational areas. In addition to growth there will also be other factors, such as obsolescence, replacement, improvement, and further development of new areas and new conveniences, replacement of outworn facilities, improvement and further development of present park properties and their composing parts, that will need to be taken into account in the years ahead. We realize that we must not only look to the future and try to see with the eyes of tomorrow but that we must indeed act toward that future.

#### *THE PARK ORGANIZATION*

The park district area coincides with the major part of the city of Urbana, but the park district is entirely separate from the city government. The park board commissioners are elected by vote for terms of six years; the elections are held biennially in odd years to take the place of those whose

terms expire. Park board commissioners serve without pay. The board meets in the park hall the second Monday of every month.

#### MEMBERS OF THE PRESENT BOARD:

FRED F. WEINARD, *President*

GEORGE F. HURD, *Vice President*

KARL B. LOHMAN

FRED C. BRASH

ALLEN E. CARTER

#### OTHERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PARKS:

*Superintendent:* TED PERRY

*Recreation director:* OSCAR W. ADAMS, JR.

*Attorney:* CHANCEY F. FINFROCK

*Secretary:* BEAULAH J. HOUSTON

*Treasurer:* E. E. LATOWSKY

*Accountant:* M. M. HICKMAN

*Auditor:* NELSON D. WAKEFIELD



*Author of the Booklet:* KARL B. LOHMAN







UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 047401184